

ANTIWAR REPORT by Gus Horowitz, November 7, 1969

The following report should be considered supplementary to the editorial that appeared in The Militant, Oct. 31.

The Oct. 15 Moratorium and the coming actions Nov. 13-15 indicate the changing dynamics of the antiwar movement from a mass movement of somewhat limited character to one of qualitatively larger and broader scope. While we cannot predict the pace of this development, Oct. 15 shows that it is clearly beginning to occur.

In response to this process, and also a factor in aiding it, has been the adaptation to the antiwar sentiment of the masses by ~~some sections of the trade union bureaucracy, some capitalist politicians, and others.~~ A correct orientation to these forces and proper utilization of them can be valuable in legitimizing antiwar protest and enhancing their mass character considerably. On Oct. 15 the presence of some capitalist politicians on the rally platforms helped to attract larger crowds, helped obtain speakers and endorsements from some trade unions including the AIA, etc. So long as the basic character of the marches and rallies remain independent and the general tone set is that of an antiwar demonstration, it is within the framework of our principles to give full support to actions such as Oct. 15. In practice, on Oct. 15, even though the bourgeois mass media attempted to convey a different impression, the predominant political tone was set by the signs and banners, march slogans, mood of the demonstrators, and the presence of sufficient numbers of SMC speakers and other speakers from the antiwar movement. In addition, on Oct. 15 more Trotskyist speakers spoke to more people than at any previous antiwar action.

The Oct. 15 and Nov. 13-15 demonstrations have drawn more official labor support than ever before. We should be alert to the expanded opportunities in this area and the opportunities to gain a greater hearing from the ranks as a result of the formal positions taken by some of the officials (who do so under rank and file pressure). In many cases buses to Washington or San Francisco have been chartered by trade union locals, antiwar speakers have been heard, and money has been raised. A recent statement by the New York SMC in support of the GE strikers (see Militant, Nov. 7) shows another way in which the antiwar movement can make linkups.

One of the most important results of the fall antiwar actions has been the unprecedented growth of the Student Mobilization Committee. Tens of thousands of students have joined the SMC, hundreds of new SMC chapters have been set up, tremendous amounts of literature have been produced, unprecedented publicity has been gained, and, in general, the SMC has become the mass national organization of antiwar students. The Oct. 15 Moratorium was the main vehicle which built the SMC initially, and the Nov. 13-15 actions continue the process. In areas where the SMC exists it was either the official sponsor and organizer of campus Moratorium activities or else

in size  
of march  
action

was a central component of a campus Moratorium coalition. This will also be the case for Nov. 13-14.

The shifting dynamic of the antiwar movement to a qualitatively larger and broader mass movement will pose problems for us as well as opportunities. Powerful forces like the trade union bureaucrats and capitalist politicians adapt to the mass antiwar sentiment with the purpose, not of building independent mass actions, but of channeling the antiwar masses into dependence upon capitalist politicians. In this much larger antiwar movement we can anticipate that the relative influence of these conservative political forces will be quite strong initially. They will bring great pressure to bear upon the antiwar movement in opposition to the central principles upon which the antiwar struggle until now has been based. They will oppose immediate withdrawal, independent mass action, non-exclusion, and democratic decision-making.

In this process there will tend to be a shift in our role from that of direct political and organizational leadership in a relatively limited mass movement to leadership of the class struggle left wing within a much larger mass movement. We look forward to this development as an expansion of political opportunities for us. The left wing is not in retreat, but is growing. It is only our relative weight in a vastly expanding movement that is changing. By waging a determined struggle now to build the militant wing of the antiwar movement we will lay the groundwork for political leadership in a much more massive antiwar movement.

The key ingredient in this process is the Student Mobilization Committee. The fundamental principles upon which the SMC is based are those of the militant left wing of the antiwar movement: immediate withdrawal, independent mass action, non-exclusion, and internal democracy. The antiwar students right now are a very large sector of the mass antiwar movement which can be won to these SMC principles. The SMC will be the largest, best-organized, and most determined fighters for this line. This puts a premium in all our antiwar work on building the SMC and convincing antiwar activists of its line.

It is very important in this process of building the SMC that nationally there be a uniform approach. Wherever student antiwar committees exist we should try to convince them to affiliate with the SMC, adopt the SMC name, and carry out the projected actions called by the national SMC. This will maximize the national impact and effectiveness of the SMC's line. The mushrooming publicity that the SMC has received means that national SMC helps build local chapters and vice versa.

We have observed and can anticipate more attempts by the Nixon administration to red-bait and violence-bait the Nov. 15 demonstrations and other actions like it. This is an attempt to cut down the size of the march and split the militant withdrawal sections of the movement, especially the students, from the more moderate forces.

There has also been direct red-baiting of the SWP and YSA in the Congressional record and some of the bourgeois press. We must educate the antiwar movement to make a forthright response attacking red-baiting by meeting it head-on. Here too, the SMC has taken the lead and set the example to the rest of the antiwar movement. To counter the violence-baiting by Nixon, we should go on an all-out campaign to mobilize the broadest possible support for the constitutional right to march in Washington.

Significant sections of the New Mobe have been bending to the pressure from the Nixon administration and the liberal capitalist politicians and their supporters. Copies of the enclosed communications sent by Fred Halstead to the New Mobe steering committee and from Carol Lipman to the New Mobe and SMC steering committees indicate some of the internal political struggles which have developed in the antiwar movement as a result of pressure from the right. The split in the west coast NMC (see reports in The Militant) can be evaluated in this light as an exacerbated and more rapid development of the same process due to the greater relative weight of the CP there.

At the last NMC steering committee meeting in Chicago, Nov. 2, further evidence of adaptation to the right was exhibited. There were sizable contingents present from the Moratorium and the CP which blocked with some of the officers and others in the steering committee. The following points were discussed:

1. NMC negotiations with the Moratorium. The New Mobe officers have been adapting to the Moratorium in attempting to draw them into support for the Nov. 15 demonstration. They made a proposal to add nine more Moratorium representatives to the NMC steering committee, making a total of 10, and to add the four Moratorium coordinators to the NMC executive committee which is composed of officers and project directors. Most of the New Mobe co-chairmen had agreed to an ultimatum from the Moratorium that the NMC executive committee expansion apply only to them, and that under no circumstances would the SMC be added.

At the steering committee meeting, Dellinger was first on the floor with an amendment. He proposed that for balance four others also be added to the executive committee: Carol Lipman of the SMC, Irving Beinin of the Guardian, John McAuliff of the Committee of Returned Volunteers, and Holbert James of the National Welfare Rights Organization. Although this was not the best counter-proposal, it became the focus for a debate over red-baiting and exclusion, in which we were able to lead the political fight. Under pressure of a threatened walkout and resignation of the other officers, Dellinger withdrew his proposal and the Moratorium was added as originally proposed. But the drawing of political lines and the emergence of our leadership of the left wing was the most important result of the discussion.

2. West Coast. The CP had mobilized considerable forces and allies from the west coast for the meeting, and they were able to have the officers push through a motion putting the "official stamp of approval" on the Hallinan group. However, this will be of dubious value to the CP in the long run, and even for Nov. 15. As a result of the political fight we waged on the west coast, the CP had to back down on its proposal to scuttle the antiwar character of the west coast action. We have won considerable support from independents and other tendencies on the west coast and have built a solid base in the Bay Area around the political line we fought for. This long-term political struggle will continue, while negotiations to settle the organizational disputes with the Hallinan group go on and the Nov. 15 demonstration is built.

3. Speakers list in Washington, D.C. Nov. 15. The New Mobe officers adapted to pressure from the Moratorium to "moderate" the speakers list as originally projected two weeks previously. Considerable pressure was brought to eliminate the SMC speaker, but this was rejected. The speakers list finally presented to the steering committee included an SMC speaker, to be selected by the SMC, and the ensuing discussion resulted in the addition of former SNCC leader, Phil Hutchings, to the speakers' list. Also added were Senators Goodell and McGovern. On balance, however, the speakers list is acceptable, although we anticipate that more attempts will be made to eliminate or diminish the weight of the more radical speakers.

4. Proposed march and confrontation at the Justice Department after the main Nov. 15 rally. Support to this action, initiated by Jerry Rubin and Abby Hoffman with the behind-the-scenes encouragement of Dellinger, was rejected. The NMC will try to discourage it from taking place, will make sure that all publicity clearly states that if it occurs it is not an NMC action, and it will not be announced from the platform.

5. Pham Van Dong letter (see enclosed copy of Halstead letter to NMC steering committee). The decision of the previous steering committee meeting to reply, attack Agnew's red-baiting, etc. was reaffirmed, although the reply may once again be held up by the officers.

In general the meeting resulted in exposing the adaptation to the right of the co-chairmen and others. Although we suffered setbacks on points 1 & 2, we clearly established ourselves as the political leadership of the left wing of the antiwar movement which upholds the basic principles upon which the movement has been based. This is an indication of the general lines which will likely mark the antiwar movement in the coming period.

It is too early to anticipate the particular details of what will happen after Nov. 15, but it is clear that our central effort should be to continue building the SMC as the mass national organization of antiwar students and the major organized left wing force in the antiwar movement.